

Beyond the Alamo®

Neighborhood Discovery Tours
Guidebook copy:

Near North Side / Deco District

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DRAFT

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Neighborhood Discoveries – Northward Expansion

This tour guide to one of San Antonio's unique neighborhoods is different than what you will find in hotel lobbies and visitor centers. More anthropological than commercial, it makes no claim to be the definitive guide to the "best of" anything. Instead, this is a tour made up of detours to the well-trodden tourist trail. We invite you to take this side road with U.S. into some of San Antonio's overlooked, undervalued or simply unknown culturally rich neighborhoods.

Within these pages you will find an introduction to the history as well as a contemporary exploration of some of the reasons the area is important to the larger San Antonio story. But, it cannot contain all there is to know. Hopefully the stories and history visited here will inspire you to come back and make some true discoveries of your own.

Beyond the Alamo

Location, location, location. The old business axiom holds true for the earliest history of San Antonio. When a group of Spanish settlers needed a camp for their first expedition some 300 years ago, they picked a spot midway between the settled parts of Northern Mexico and the French controlled towns of East Texas. That point is near where present South Loop 410 crosses the San Antonio River. Coahuiltecan, Payay, Lipan Apache and other native peoples already enjoyed this fertile river valley-a land they called “Yanaguana.” Nevertheless, the Spanish chose to call it San Antonio de Padua in honor of their arrival on this saint’s celebrated day. In late April of 1719, Governor Don Martin de Alarcon led some 72 Spaniards to the area to stay. Father Antonio de Buenaventura Olivares arrived soon after to establish the Mission San Antonio De Valero. We know this mission as the Alamo.

Today the Alamo is indeed “remembered” in history, myth, heart and controversy. Tourists come to San Antonio from throughout the world to see the legendary structure. But the story of San Antonio stretches far beyond those cool stone walls.

Northward Expansion, Renovation and Rebirth

When in San Antonio, some locals refer to the city’s northernmost suburbs as *Loopland*. Depending on whom you ask, the word and corresponding label for those who live there, *Looplanders*, could be terms of either affection or derision. The “loopy land” referred to here encompasses areas that surround San Antonio’s double loops of highway known as 410 and 1604. Although this tour is deemed the Northside Tour, most of the sites on the route actually fall inside the inner loop. In fact, the “Northside” you will visit today actually begins on the northern edge of downtown and extends to what once were the northern suburbs of San Antonio, pre-WWII neighborhoods created by the city’s early trolley car routes. In the grand sprawl of current-day San Antonio, those suburbs could hypothetically be considered downtown.

But in the spirit of San Antonio’s original northward expansion and the distinctive architecture that accompanied it, get ready to learn about the “original Northside.” What are now highways were once fields and while some modern facades still cover architectural treasures, much work in recent years has revived forgotten thoroughfares that were once the roads out of town. Along the way we will also get to know three of the most significant visual arts centers in the city: The San Antonio Museum of Art, ArtPace and the Southwest School of Art and Craft. The diverse and unique missions of the three sites are housed in equally diverse and unique buildings. Indeed this is a tour both of form and function, of how a city grew and shaped itself as well as how architecture shapes and is shaped by creative vision and revival.

Art Pace

The tour begins with one of the newer kids on San Antonio's art block, one with influence far beyond the city borders. At any given moment in the renovated 18,000 square foot ArtPace facility—formally a 1920s era car showroom— one international artist, one US artist, and one regional artist are either busy creating new work or the galleries are displaying the last group's most recent projects. Indeed, ArtPace's combination of international, national, and regional groupings of artists has received international attention. The mixture serves two functions: it introduces new and contemporary ideas and trends to the South Texas area while carefully nurturing local art talent in the process.

Since the first residency program—less than ten years ago—over 70 artists have come through ArtPace's studios. Established in 1993 by local artist and art supporter Linda Pace, ArtPace and its International Artist-In-Residence program have quickly grown into one of the art world's most talked-about events. Four times a year, guest curators from distinguished art institutions choose three established or emerging artists to participate in the creation and exhibition of new projects. For two months, these three artists are given housing, studio space, travel, a stipend, materials, technical support and the opportunity to create completely new art works. As each residency ends, flurries of related art activities take place. In addition to the exhibition opening of the newly created works, artist gallery talks and lectures are held with the resident artists and the curator responsible for the trio's selection. As reported in the San Antonio Express News, "in international art circles, when you mention San Antonio, people don't say, 'Oh yes, the Alamo. They say, 'Oh yes, ArtPace.'"

In addition to the forum ArtPace provides for international art in San Antonio, the structure of the building itself reflects the contemporary and urban sensibility of much of the work that is exhibited there. The industrial feel, galvanized steel and striking colors were designed by San Antonio architectural firm Lake/Flato And no less important than the esteemed International Artist in Residence Program is the ongoing series of exhibitions in the Hudson (Show) Room. The (Show) Room is curated by ArtPace Director, Kathryn Kanjo who celebrates the ability of San Antonio to support an institution with a vision like ArtPace's. "We think of the very concept of "place" as a site of exchange, of people, ideas. ArtPace could have gone anywhere but the founder Linda Pace is from here and wanted it to remain here, in a structure that was already here." With one eye on Texas and the other on the greater art world, ArtPace is creating a crossroad all its own

Jefferson High School

Although different in purpose, Jefferson High School is another San Antonio institution with grand vision. It is a vision that began clear back in 1919 when only two high schools existed in San Antonio, Brackenridge on the South side of town and Main Avenue on the North. While Brackenridge was a relatively new building, the Main campus was old and

extremely crowded. Plans were made for a new Northside school and the resulting structure, with its gleaming silver dome designed by Adams and Adams Architects, looked to many like a cross between a palatial residence, a four star hotel and an expansive elaborately-tiled Spanish estate. Built in 1932 on a site covered with mesquite trees and weeds and far from the central city, Jefferson High School's first motto might have been "more cows than students." But critics of the Depression Era Extravagance of the \$1,250,000 school did not yet envision the future of what *Life Magazine* would later call "the most outstanding high school in America."

Much of the structure was built by the Works Progress Administration. Their logo remains on tiles in the library. Eight mule-drawn rigs were used to dig the 35-foot deep holes for the foundation. The carvings at the main entrance were done by an Italian immigrant named Hannibal Pianta and his son Eugene. The ornamental concrete was made in sections using concrete molds located at the Pianta Company on Fredericksburg Road that were then transported to the site. The younger Piantas also did the ornamental concrete work at the old Aztec Theater while their grandfather contributed to the elaborate stonework at the Texas State Capitol. Another feature is the elaborate Spanish tile work which is still visible inside the building.

When it opened, Jefferson High School held regular classes in history and math. But they also featured manners, dancing and radio broadcasting. It was the first school in San Antonio to have its own gymnasium. The nearly 1400 students who chose to transfer from Main Avenue High School picked the name of Thomas Jefferson High School. As *Life Magazine* quoted in a September 1938 special on the school, "Nothing could be more appropriate than that the first million and a half dollar educational plant should bear the name of the man who once wrote, 'No surer foundation than large scale education can be devised for the preservation of freedom and happiness.'" Jefferson had its own motto displayed on a specially designed coat of arms. It is cast in stone on all four sides of the tower dome and bears the words *In Omni uno* or "All for one and one for all."

The feature in *Life Magazine* had a cover photo of two of the famous Jefferson Lassos, a pep club founded by Miss Constance Douglas in October of 1932. The uptown cowgirl look of the group featured a blue flannel skirt, blue bolero jacket, red satin blouse, a pearl gray Stetson hat and of course the essential lasso ropes. After the article was published, Twentieth Century Fox filmed two movies on the Jefferson campus. The first was "High School" starring Jane Withers, which was filmed in 1938. The second, also starring Withers was a 1939 sequel called, "Texas Girl". More recently the film "Johnny B. Goode" was filmed within the school's impressive architecture starring Anthony Michael Hall and Robert Downey Jr.

To preserve the heritage of the school, the Student Council of 1982-83 sought to have the building declared a city Historical Landmark. On May 15, 1983 after approval of the School Board, the San Antonio Historical Society and the Re-Zoning Commission, the

City Council made it official. On July 30, 1983, the Texas State Historical Society voted unanimously to make the structure a state landmark as well. The Society also recommended to the Federal Department of Interior that Jefferson be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Both the landscaping and architecture were approved on September 22, 1983. According to Jefferson High School architecture instructor, Glen Ball, the exterior of a building is the only portion of a building protected in most cases. Ball and others are currently working to have the interior of the building deemed historic as well.

Jefferson/Monticello Neighborhood/Woodlawn Lake

Navigating north from downtown through the dense, urban glut of taco joints, bus stops and double-decker highways, it's hard to believe that at one time the space around Woodlawn Lake was once wild country. Part of San Antonio's mid 18th Century transition from frontier town to big city, the Woodlawn Lake area was the beginning of what would soon become suburban growth—growth that has extended the city limits to miles beyond this small lake where it all began.

Indeed, by 1850 San Antonio was growing too big for its small town britches. In 1852, at a city land auction, Yankee land speculators, rich local families and representatives from various northern banks bought thousands of parcels of land north of the San Pedro springs which were at that time, the northern most reaches of San Antonio. Then in 1887 the West End Town Company of Cincinnati bought 1,000 acres of land for housing development. Like the coming of the transcontinental railroads, which brought people and industry to the American West, a much needed trolley line connected the bustling downtown area of San Antonio with the far but growing West End. As a November 1999 San Antonio Express News article by David Richeleau describes, "Woodlawn Lake used to be where streetcars stopped, people hooked fish brought in from the state hatchery in San Marcos and families of Civil War veterans held picnics in the 1900s. In 1888, an Ohio syndicate bought land to build one of San Antonio's first suburbs. Builders created the lake when a berm was built for trolley tracks to cross the south end of a large swamp area along Alazan creek and it acted like a dam that formed the 26 acre lake."

It was 1888 when the Crosstown Street Railroad ran its first trolley. For shoppers, students, and commuters alike, downtown was now a mere 15 minutes away. However, by the twenties, the car culture that would define ongoing trends in American commerce and design was already taking hold. An advertisement from a 1928 San Antonio Light hailed the convenience of the new suburb and retold the journey of a "Mr. A," who clocked his trip from the corner of Donaldson and Fredericksburg to the courthouse. "At a speed well within traffic regulations it took him just 13 minutes from a central point in Woodlawn District to the center downtown. High above the city and away from the noise and dust of traffic, S.A.'s finest residential district is within a few minutes of the business and shopping section on several direct routes and no undesirable areas to be traversed on the way."

The West End Town Company's plan worked. Eighty homes were built that first year. San Antonio institutions like the now-closed Peacock Military Academy for Boys, St. Louis College, and present-day St. Mary's University were also constructed. West End Lake eventually became a resort-like area for San Antonio residents with fishing, boating and other outdoor activities during the day, and dances on weekend nights. The city took over the lake in 1918 and early improvements were made, including a boat landing, landscaping, and a floating pavilion. In 1920, to highlight the city's beautification

program and reflect the area's new improvements, the name was officially changed Woodlawn Lake. Josephine Tobin Drive still rims the lake and is named after then Mayor Tobin's mother. The street's more unofficial claim to fame is its history as being the longtime "Lovers' Lane" for courting couples. Among those said to have lingered here include young Lieutenant Dwight D. Eisenhower and his girl Mamie who found love among the rowboats.

Legends of Woodlawn Lake abound. Some highlights are listed below.

1890 – The little steamboat arrived and was placed on lake

1899 - Temperature dropped to 14 degrees Fahrenheit and lake froze over. That same year, the city purchased the lake for \$1000 from Mrs. John Anderson

1918–1926 – W. H. Suden leased the lake and began operating it as a family resort that featured free movies and a fleet of rowboats

1920 – First real growth in the surrounding area

1966 - Group of high school students were suspected of plotting to blow up the dam. Officials began investigating after the tip and a large amount of metallic sodium was found missing from Thomas Jefferson High School.

1979 – Immense lily invasion that choked the lake

1981 – On April 3, a man named John who claimed he had a message from God but wasn't quite sure what it was attracted a crown when he climbed to the top of the miniature lighthouse in the nearly dry Woodlawn Lake. Not a minister but a graduate of Jefferson High School, he took off shoes and shirt and declared that he planned to stay for 3 days and 3 nights. Authorities confirmed while "John" was strange, he was doing nothing illegal.

One lingering legend is that of the great "Woodlawn Lake Gator." Many sightings describe a creature of some 10 feet in length with a greenish scaly back. No one has confirmed that it is an actual alligator. They are not rare in South Texas but Woodlawn Lake is an unlikely home. Parks officials think the true creature is a rather large Alligator Gars, a big game fish that may make its home in the lake. However, rumors persist that it was an actual alligator and there are various drainage tunnels that could have sheltered the creature during the periods when the lake has been dredged.

Midtown Blanco and the Deco District

As in many growing cities, what was once the "edge of town" is now almost inner city. Bounded by West Summit to the south, Hildebrand Avenue to the north and sandwiched

between San Pedro and Highway IH 10, the area surrounding the MidTown on Blanco commercial corridor houses some 9,700 residents. According to Rick Reyna, Director of MidTown on Blanco Association, the area was historically more densely populated. "The business district began in 1925 because the population was there to support them. We had four grocery stores, three pharmacies, and stores that sold clothes and food. Everything you needed to do, you could do in walking distance or a short drive."

The evolution of the area can be traced to the turn of the century when current day Alta Vista and Beacon Hill neighborhoods were plotted. The San Antonio city limits were established in 1838 and consisted of 36 square miles. North Street (Hildebrand), the northern boundary of the neighborhoods, was also the northern border of the city. The city's population began to grow from just over 8,200 people in 1860 to 38,000 people in 1890. With this large growth, the pressure to expand mounted. Soon, the development of San Pedro Park, the 2nd oldest City Park in the entire United States, drew people north to enjoy the breezes and views just above the city. Reserved as a public park in 1851, San Pedro became one of San Antonio's most popular tourist attractions. The once flowing springs have recently been reopened as a public pool. As demand for the area grew, J.J. Dueier established the San Antonio Street Railway Company in 1866 to create a railway from downtown to the park. Adding to this northward flow was the arrival of the Galveston, Harrisburg, and San Antonio Railway in 1877. The railway not only improved accessibility for visitors and new residents, but also provided better availability of building materials. San Antonio's first real estate boom was underway.

Nowadays MidTown on Blanco works closely with the neighborhood associations of Alta Vista and Beacon Hill. Reyna says the focus is to support commercial redevelopment in the area. While many popular destinations on Blanco Road such as Chris Madrid's, the Blanco Café, Casbeers and numerous antique stores still draw crowds the evolution of the highway system and shopping malls has created a northern migration that has robbed the area of many of its neighbors and patrons. "Everyone wanted to live in a new house in a new part of town," said Reyna. With that exodus, nearby Beacon Hill and Alta Vista neighborhoods began to slide, becoming a stark contrast to its historically designated neighbor to the east, Monte Vista. All three neighborhoods - which are divided only by San Pedro Avenue on Monte Vista's western edge and a set of railroad tracks between Beacon Hill and Alta Vista - were developed in the early 1900s with similar housing stock. "Because of the era they were built in, they were built to last," Reyna said. "You can see it in even the small cottages and bungalows - the craftsmanship is there." As the population migrated so did the commercial anchors. The MidTown Business District was primarily rural during the first two decades of the 20th century. In 1910, only a few homes dotted the street. The only one that remains is located at 1815 Blanco and houses David W. Pipes woodworking business. In 1923, Agnes Cotton School No. 20 was built on the corner of Blanco Road and Fulton. In 1925, the North Haven subdivision was platted on the last parcel of vacant land left in the area. The first commercial building to be built was current day Powell Cleaners at 1401 Blanco, which

once held the Blanco Road Drug Shop. It was followed by a large Handy Andy Grocery store that was built sometime between 1926-1934. The building now houses Antiques on Hildebrand. The Handy Andy was just one of several grocery stores that served the surrounding neighborhoods. Surprisingly, the area continued to develop through the Depression and thrived on through the WWII years. When the Handy Andy closed in 1951, it seemed to nail the coffin shut on a declining neighborhood. An increasingly dependent car culture needed parking the store did not provide. At the same time the highway system was built. The interstates and loops opened up the far north and people moved out of older neighborhoods. In the story of many a “mom and pop corner store” lost to the mall, small businesses began to close. But the ghost-town days of the area now seem to be exorcised.

Nearly all of the buildings are filled and younger residents are moving in and fixing up older homes. The MidTown on Blanco Association features a yearly festival the third week of October called Blanco’s Classic Days. The celebration brings out classic cars and some 2,000 people to eat, drink, dance in the streets and celebrate the new life on the old blocks. A house tour has also highlighted neighborhood residences. Some houses included on the tour include:

2160 W. Summit Ave. A two-story home designed by architect Lloyd Shoop in 1935. Features high ceilings, crown moldings, a varnished wood fireplace, vintage wood floors, a partial basement and a veranda spanning the width of the house.

2135 W. Summit. A modified Federal one-story house built in 1941 by Ellis Wilson, later purchased by the Roy Akers family. Spacious rooms, oak flooring, many built-in cabinets, a recently restored kitchen and traditional pieces of furnishings, which the owners have acquired over the years.

2101 W. Gramercy Place. Built in the 1930s, this home is an example of Spanish and Moorish styles and originally belonged to one of the architects from the firm that built Jefferson High School. It features plaster walls and crown moldings, original light fixtures, a breakfast room with scallop-shell built-ins, an original 1949 O’Keefe and Merritt stove in the kitchen and a red clay tile roof.

2125 W. Gramercy Place. Built in the 1930s for the owner of the Luchese boot company, this home, more than 4,000 square feet in size, features an original servant bell system still in operation, crown moldings and hardwood floors, a winding staircase with ornamental moldings, curved walls in the entry room and glass blocks off the sun room, Federal Revival-style fireplace and more.

2136 W. Gramercy Place. Eclectic-style home with exterior features combining traditional and Art Deco elements. The house was built in 1936 for the president

of the Coca-Cola Distributing Co., and includes elegant arched doorways and Art Deco furnishings.

Deco District

Just west of Midtown on Blanco is another commercial and residential district on the move, a move clearly focused on the future by highlighting the best of the past. It is fascinating to follow the journey of historical architectural and design details from their specific country of origin to their export and influence to other parts of the world. And along the area of Fredericksburg Road—just north of downtown—it is easy to see the influence of Paris in 1925 in the Art Deco inspired facades of buildings as well as in the details of old business signs. First exhibited at the Paris Exhibition of 1925, Art Deco as a design principle flourished between the First and Second World Wars. Principles of design with an emphasis on ideas of industry and modernism resulted in an elegant style of cool sophistication characterized by sleek lines, graceful curves, and decorative use of materials such as chrome, enamel and steel. An inherently contradictory style, Art Deco was a “modernization” of such classical influences as Far and Middle Eastern, Greek and Roman as well as Mayan designs. Indeed, some of San Antonio’s most interesting examples of the style can be seen on Fredericksburg Road’s older buildings. These include the facades of the Wellness Connection at 1424; the fluted vertical molding on the Woodlawn Theater at 1920; and the curves and racing stripes at Taqueria La Tapatia at 2318. Other examples include Joe’s Gym at 1707; Kenpo Karate at 1908; La Bella Apartments at 2121; and the Conoco Service Station at 2202.

While San Antonio is admittedly not known as an Art Deco town, the Deco District references the very factors of modernity and industry that are responsible for the creation of the neighborhood. Furthermore, the “Deco thread” that connects the Fredericksburg Road corridor was strong enough to convince a group of residents from the surrounding Jefferson and Monticello Neighborhoods to make it the lynchpin of their redevelopment efforts. Beginning in 1988, the neighborhood associations began the long effort to revitalize this once-thriving business corridor that had fallen prey to the Post WWII economic boom era and was essentially left to abandoned buildings and cheap storefronts. The decline was especially tragic given the area’s rich and unique architectural history. But the early conceptualization of the redesign ideas garnered the neighborhood associations some \$1.3 million dollars from the Economic Development Administration. It was a unique partnership between neighborhood associations, federal, state and city government. The funding which augmented a city-funded drainage project also included transportation and communication industries, the Fine Arts Commission and the Historic Review Board. The collaboration culminated in nearly eight years of preparation and sixteen months of construction to create aesthetic elements including bus shelters, stone planters, underground utilities, and scored and herringbone sidewalk patterns. As neighborhood resident and *San Antonio Express-News* columnist Mike Greenberg writes, “When I moved to Donaldson in 1988, the once lively retailing hub

that includes the Woodlawn Theater was down at the heels and a visual wreck. Today...the public space now creates a much more inviting, coherent and functional context for business.”

Blue Star on Fredericksburg Road

In addition to permanent design features, the Deco District has also been the site of several temporary art events that heightened awareness of both the unique neighborhood and the talents of local artists. Blue Star on Fredericksburg Road is rooted in a 1995 project on downtown Houston Street. This collaboration between the Blue Star Arts Space and downtown merchants was a unique and successful partnership between business and the arts. Deco District resident and artist Felix Padrón worked with the group to extend the outreach of the arts northwest to Fredericksburg Road. The first installation in 1997 attracted thousands of art lovers, neighborhood residents and curious onlookers to an evening of art, commerce and celebration. Padrón curated a second event in 1998 in which selected artists created plans for elaborate conceptual fountains that would beautify specific sites in San Antonio. Representations of the fountains were displayed in store windows. Beyond the success of such individual evenings, Padrón credits the events with the current focus of city arts funding on projects that include community input and implementation.

URBAN 15

Perhaps one of Fredericksburg Road’s newer residents most embodies this kind of ongoing collaboration and innovation. Housed in the City-owned Travis Building, the URBAN 15 Group is a nearly 30 year old performance troupe and education center whose mission includes “experimentation with the merging of diverse cultures and the juxtapositions of traditions” and a “commitment to international music and movement expressions...that encompasses modern-ethnic dance and drumming forms that combine the traditional with the non-traditional to create a form that speaks to the 21st century community. Crossing lines of gender, class, race, religion and breaking the prejudice barriers of physical beauty, size and age.” The group’s programming includes The Center for Celebration Arts, Carnaval de San Anto, Grupo Vida/Utopian Performance Group, the Urban School of Music and Dance, after school and summer programs for children and a Cultural Art Movie Series. According to URBAN 15 Creative Director, Cat Cisneros, the group has worked together to modernize the Fredericksburg Road Building into a professional dance and music rehearsal space. Each year URBAN 15 holds open tryouts for an intergenerational ensemble that creates the street dance extravaganza of Carnaval De San Anto. In addition, a smaller performance troupe dances and drums on both the stage and street year-round across the state and country including performances at the 1997 and 2001 Presidential Inaugurations. Cisneros is equally excited about the roots, which the group has newly planted in the Deco District. With URBAN 15 as an anchor, she envisions the Travis Building as a future arts center that spans the block and spreads San Antonio’s cultural wings beyond the well-trodden downtown corridors.

Keeping Cool

If art alone is not your thing, you can still catch the Deco vibe at the artiest miniature golf course in San Antonio. Just west of Highway IH 10 on Fredericksburg Road, no one can miss Cool Crest's art deco sign. Step into the hidden world of this secluded, super-shaded hideaway built in 1937 by Harold Metzger. It might be hard to feel hip while playing miniature golf but if it is possible, here is the place to do it. Maria "Ria" Metzger has kept this San Antonio landmark alive for 44 of its 64 years. She waters the plants and spins the tunes. It could be Frank Sinatra or Dean Martin and even in the heat of San Antonio summer, the many ponds, creeks and fountains keep putters cool. Located on the top of a hill at 1402 Fredericksburg Road next to the Oak Farms Dairy, Cool Crest provides fine views of the downtown skyline. Hardcore putt-putters will also appreciate the horseshoe loops, off-kilter holes and a real pitching wedge obstacle along the two courses.

Southwest School of Art and Craft

A structure with an even-longer history and at least as many small nooks and crannies is the Southwest School of Art and Craft. Located on two adjacent campuses: the Navarro Campus, which opened in 1998, and the Ursuline Campus, which opened in 1971. The Ursuline Campus is located on the former site of the Ursuline Academy & Convent, which was opened by French Ursuline nuns in 1851 as an all-girls school. In 1965, a group of San Antonians who felt that there was a need for local education in the arts began what is now the Southwest School of Art & Craft. Today the School continues to gain national recognition as a historic site and as a resource for arts education, offering programs for adults, children and teens. The School offers classes taught by outstanding local, regional and national artists. The School also presents exhibitions, a lecture series, and guided tours of the historic site.

The program of the Southwest School of Art & Craft is comprised of four parts: Adult Studio Classes, Young Artist Programs, Exhibitions, and Public Programs. Adult programs include: Ceramics, Fibers, Metals, Painting, Drawing and Printmaking, Paper & Book Arts, and Photography. Young Artist Programs are organized into four different programs: Saturday Morning Discovery, Mobile Arts Program, Tuition-based Classes, and the Teacher Training Initiative. Saturday Morning Discovery is a free studio art program for children and families.

The Ursuline Campus, now on the National Register of Historic Places is on the site of the former Ursuline Convent and Academy and is open to the public. Among the highlights of the historic site are the elegant architecture of the two-story buildings which are constructed of local limestone, the beautiful chapel with some of the original stained glass windows made in France, and the surrounding gardens and courtyards. Parking, tours, a restaurant, and gift shop are available for visitors as are a visitor's center and museum. Southwest School of Art and Craft Director, Paula Owen looks to the unique structure of the historic sight for balance and a reminder of the school's mission to further the craft of fine art. According to Owen, "to be profound, art must move you in some

direction and for whatever reason this place moves you. Perhaps it is the architectural details, perhaps the intimate spaces. Maybe it is the sense of how technical and material come together.” Owen describes her work at the school as that of creating opportunities for direct experience, meaning both the creation of and viewing of art. She comments, “There is a human dimension to things here, not something austere or sterile. Our work attracts all ages and provides a place of contemplation and ambiance. The work that happens here is not theoretical, detached or conceptual, it is tactile, material and human.”

San Antonio Museum of Art

Yet another San Antonio arts organization that is housed in a unique pre-existing structure is the San Antonio Museum of Art. In 1972, museum officials began looking at the old Lone Star Brewery on Jones Street as a place to house the new art museum that was spun off from the Witte Museum. The nine old brewery structures were built between 1900-1910. The modified Italian Romanesque structure with trick supporting walls, cast iron supports, floors of reinforced concrete and two towers with an iron catwalk between them was an exciting choice. In July of 1977, then-Mayor Lila Cockrell opened the building with a bottle of bubbly. It seemed fitting for a place that had housed the works of St. Louis beer tycoon Adolphus Busch since 1903. Beers were made under the Alamo and Erlanger labels. By 1905 it was the biggest brewery in Texas. Prohibition turned the brewery’s efforts to a soft drink called Tango but the many German, Polish and Czechs immigrants in the area were not interested in such substitutes and in 1921 the structure became a cotton mill. The large areas that once held fermentation cauldrons now house works of art. In addition, the natural circulation pattern of the structure is such that a visitor turns left into the western portion, goes upstairs, crosses over between the tours and returns down on the other side.

One of the focuses of the museum is the extensive Latin American art collection of the Nelson A. Rockefeller Center. Billed as the nation's first center for Latin American art and as a major cultural asset for the Latino community, the Center is also an important destination for scholars. The 30,000-square-foot center occupies a three-story addition to the existing museum structure and brings together Latin American objects from collections previously scattered throughout the existing museum - pre-Columbian antiquities, folk art, works from the Colonial period and a small but choice group of modern works from Mexico and South America. About a quarter of the 10,000 objects will be on exhibit at any given time. "As a whole collection, it's as good as any you'll find, because of its comprehensiveness, and because it shows 4,000 years of art in a contiguous space," said Marion Oettinger, the museum's curator of Latin American art.

The center is named for a former U.S. vice president and New York governor who avidly collected Mexican folk art from his first trip to Mexico in 1933 until his last in 1978, shortly before his death. Rockefeller's daughter, Ann Rockefeller Roberts, donated about 2,500 works from the 3,000-piece collection to the San Antonio

Museum of Art in 1985. That same year, the San Antonio museum also got Robert K. Winn's important collection of Mexican folk art. Together, the Rockefeller and Winn collections gave the fledgling museum its first legitimate claim to national prominence. Interestingly, this impressive institution began as little more than a spin-off of the Witte Museum with a collection of historic Texas furniture and the world's largest collection of Fiesta coronation gowns. The Rockefeller collection put the museum on the map and complemented the museum's existing holdings of Mexican Colonial art and the Elizabeth Huth Coates Maddux's collection of pre-Columbian art. Another turning point was a blockbuster exhibit, "Mexico: Splendors of 30 Centuries." According to art consultant Eduardo Díaz, "When the museum ... saw the expanse of Mexican art and Latin American art in general, and what it meant to have an exhibit like that in a city like this, and when they took note of the sheer numbers of people - 275,000 visitors in four months - I think it really opened up a lot of eyes at the museum."

The new wing is L-shaped, with the bottom of the L, parallel to Jones Avenue, holding the contemporary and pre-Columbian galleries. The stem, projecting north toward the San Antonio River, holds the folk art and Colonial galleries. The north facade features two-story windows that slope into the brick wall, subtly evoking the geometry of ancient Mexican pyramids. These windows provide views of giant oaks shading a modest sculpture garden and of the tile-faced gateway transplanted from the Urrutia estate. Each of the main galleries has a distinctive character - Mayan arches in the pre-Columbian space, wood lintels over the doorways in the folk-art gallery, a barrel vault over the central axis of the basilica-like Colonial gallery. The contemporary gallery's very high ceilings can accommodate the largest modern canvases. Handsome details include custom balcony rails in a hybrid of rustic and industrial styles; gallery entrance signs of laser-cut metal on frosted glass; and sloping windows inserted into the brick wall.

Jessie Marion Koogler McNay and the McNay Art Museum

Born February 7, 1883 in De Graff, Ohio, Jessie Marion Koogler McNay lived her early life together with her family in Kansas. When oil was discovered on their property, the Koogler family made a fortune. Always interested in art, McNay studied first at the University of Kansas and later at the Art Institute of Chicago. She was married and divorced several times and eventually retained her first husband's name. After the death of her parents, McNay inherited the family's oil fortune. She moved to San Antonio in 1926 after marrying a San Antonio physician and soon after began construction on a Spanish Colonial style mansion on an acreage called Sunset Hills at the intersection of Austin Highway and North New Braunfels. McNay herself designed many of the structure's stenciled ceiling and tiles. Completed in 1929, the mansion housed McNay's collection which included many American watercolor and French impressionist paintings as well as art by Pueblo people of New Mexico where McNay frequently traveled. McNay died of pneumonia on April 13, 1950. The museum in her residence was officially opened to the public in 1954 and is the first museum of modern art in Texas. McNay's original bequest of European and American art, her 24-room residence, most of

her fortune and the 23 acres surrounding the home compose a stunning site. The grounds themselves are worth a visit and include a Japanese Garden, fishpond and lush, broad lawns. The current collection focuses on 20th century American painting as well as 19th and 20th century European and American prints, theater arts, drawings and sculptures. Artists represented in the collection include Van Gogh, Cezanne, Picasso, O'Keefe and Jackson Pollack. The museum also features a research library with 30,000 volumes, the 300-seat Leeper Auditorium, and a Museum Store.

Cementville

Many a San Antonio visitor has driven into the city from the airport by heading south on Highway 281. Along the way, a line of towering smokestacks emerges from the miles of trees. But these stacks don't smoke anymore and are now incorporated into the popular "Quarry Market" shopping center and movie theater. But they were not always mere decoration. The shopping center is located on the grounds of the former cement plant of the Alamo Cement Company. The surrounding area known as Cementville was once home to thousands of the company's workers and their families. First chartered in 1880 when Englishman William Loy discovered natural cement rock near San Antonio, the first plant was powered by steam engine and produced ten barrels of cement daily. The plant's original quarry is now the site of the Japanese Sunken Gardens in Brackenridge Park. In 1908 the company moved to and founded the Cementville town. In 1914, company president Charles Baumberger developed the area complete with housing, a swimming pool, a recreational hall and a school. But by 1922, nearby Alamo Heights was voted an independent municipality and with completion of the Olmos Dam, development of the area began. Alamo Heights, which was becoming one of the wealthiest communities in San Antonio, continued to grow around Cementville. But in 1949 workers could still rent a home in the area for only \$3 per week so the communities remained largely segregated. Most Cementville residents did not send their children to Alamo Heights Schools although there was no restriction against it. By the 1960s, Cementville was largely referred to as the Alamo Heights slums. In 1980, Alamo Cement built a modern plant outside Loop 1604. The Cementville plant closed and most families left their homes while others bought their homes from the company and had them moved to other locations. Over the next few years, families continued to move until only six families remained. The area fell into serious disrepair and was often used as a dumping ground. Eventually work began on a residential project called Lincoln Heights and the remaining families were driven out. In the early 90s work began to turn the former plant into a shopping center. The main plant building, the office and the laboratory were restored and turned into retail spaces and restaurants and the movie theater. One building was razed and a near replica was erected in the same spot. These days, little remains of the industry that once thrived on this spot. A mock display of the work of the cement factory, complete with lights and sound effects, occurs regularly inside the movie lobby. The machine is fake but the photographs that line the walls are real. In the faces, a story of the life that was once made at this site is set in stone.

Conclusion

It is fascinating to follow the journey of architectural details from their location and era of origin to the present. Whether one visits the operating aqueducts in South San Antonio near the Missions, structures that would not be out of place in 16th Century Spain, or notes the Art Deco details of the Deco Districts revamped infrastructure, the significance is both historic and current. So next time you find yourself circling San Antonio on one of the outer loops, try to picture a day when all you would have seen was trees. Then take the next exit and wind your way towards the riches tucked just inside the loop like jewels in a necklace. Once this was *the* Northside. Now it is a series of relatively central neighborhoods that thrive on a human scale complete with front porches and trees with deep roots and trunks too wide to reach around. Farther out in *Loopland*, the familiar facades of discount stores and chain restaurants could be found anywhere in the United States. But the renovated walls of ArtPace, SAMA and the McNay as well as the age old stone of the Southwest School of Art and Craft are found no where but here. From the wooden-floored dance studio of URBAN 15 to the front porch of a Monticello bungalow to the to the greens of Cool Crest Miniature Golf, this journey through the Northside has a place for anyone to feel right at home.

Resource List

Rick Reyna
Midtown Blanco
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email: rereyna@swbell.net

Linda Pace or Kathryn Kanjo
ArtPace
445 N. Main
phone: 212-4900
fax: 212-4990
email: lpace@artpace.org / kkanjo@artpace.org
<http://www.artpace.org>

Paula Owen
Southwest School of Art and Craft
300 Augusta
phone: 224-1848
fax: 224-9337
email: powen@swschool.org
<http://www.swschool.org>

George Neubert
San Antonio Museum of Art
200 West Jones Ave.
phone: 978-8111
fax: 978-8112
email: director@world-net.net
<http://www.samuseum.org>

Lynn Zalcberg
Jewish Community Center
12500 NW Military Drive
phone: 302-6827
email: zalcberg@jcc-sa.org
<http://www.jccsanantonio.org>

**Near North Side / Deco District
Selected Bibliography**

Jefferson High School by Ron Donaldson, Student Council President 1969. Booklet released again by the 1982 Student Council, Thomas Jefferson High School.

San Antonio on Track by Ana Maria Watson, Trinity University. Urban Studies Program, May 1982.

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Daughters of the Republic of Texas Library Vertical Files:

Midtown

Fredericksburg Road

Woodlawn Lake

Jefferson Neighborhood Association

Thomas Jefferson High School

San Antonio Express News and San Antonio Light – Archives

7/29/28 – The Arc of Opportunity

9/16/77 – Old Brewery Studied as Art Museum

11/6/96 – Neighborhood's rebirth shaped by neighbors by Mike Greenberg

9/11/98 – Running With the Mustangs by Mike Greenberg

9/16/98 – Inner City Revival by Amy Dorsett

12/19/98 – A Look Back by Paula Allen

12/20/00 – Fredericksburg Deco District

12/28/00 – Deco District Restorations by Anne Miller

Personal and Telephone Interviews between 9/17/01 and 10/19/02

Kathryn Kanjo – ArtPace

Paula Owen – Southwest School of Art and Craft

Rick Reyna – Midtown Blanco

Cat Cisneros – Urban 15

Felix Padrón

Daryl Ohlenbusch

Thanks to Jim Mendiola for primary research.

About the writer:

Jenny Browne has a bachelor's degree in African American studies from University of Wisconsin, Madison. She has worked and studied in Africa, Central America, Eastern Europe, and Asia as a travel correspondent. In San Antonio, she works as a journalist and as a poet in residence for the Texas Commission on the Arts, Arts San Antonio, and Gemini Ink. She was nominated for a 2000 Pushcart Prize and her poems will be featured with the other Texas poets in the Poetry Society of America's Poetry in Motion Project in Austin, Texas. Her first collection, Glass was published in 2000 by Pecan Grove Press.

About **Gemini Ink**:

When the Office of Cultural Affairs began to work on developing the Neighborhood Discovery Tours, it contracted with Gemini Ink to handle the researching, writing and editing of the manuscripts.

Gemini Ink is San Antonio's non-profit, literary arts center. It is located in new offices at 513 S. Presa, San Antonio, Texas 78205.

Their phone is 210-734-WORD (9673) or Toll-free 877-734-WORD (9673).

Fax is 210-737-0688 and email is info@geminiink.org

The mission of Gemini Ink is:

- to celebrate art in literature
- to expose as wide a segment of the area's population as possible to the best current and classical literature in an entertaining, educational and enlightening fashion
- to design a program of the humanities, involving professional performers from several artistic disciplines for each performance, including writers, actors, singers, musicians, and academic scholars
- to celebrate individual bodies of literature which identify with various cultural or ethnic groups, thereby encouraging cross-cultural acceptance
- to offer university-and master-level classes in various types of writing, literature, theory, philosophy, psychology, and the related arts